(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the Poineer dated January 18, 1995 under the caption "Government may open insurance to foreign firms";

(b) if so, what are the details of the proposal received from the U.S. Commerce Secretary in that regard and the reaction of the Government of India in regard thereto; and

(c) whether Government have analysed its impact on the functioning of LIC and other Government Insurance Companies and if so, the details thereof and the extent to which it would affect their business?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a) The question of opening up our insurance industry to external competition did not figure in the discussions held between our Prime Minister and the US Commerce Secretary on 17th January, 1995 as reported in the Pioneer on the 18th January, 1995.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Amount collected from importers and Exporters as customs duty

55. SHRI PRAVAT KUMAR SAMANTARAY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total amount collected from Importers and Exporters operating in different major ports as customs duty by the Customs Department during the years 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95;

(b) whether it is a fact that customs collection is falling down; and

(c) if so, what are the contributory factors thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a) The total customs duty collected from all custom houses and ports during 1992-93, 1993-94 and April, '94 — Jan. '95 are as under:—

Period	(Rs. in crores)
1992-93 . . .	23717.28
1993-94 (Prov.) .	22079.49
April, '94—Jan., '95 (Prov.)	21133.23

(b) The customs revenue collected during April, '94—Jan., '95 has shown 18.98% increase over the collection made in the corresponding period of previous year.

(c) Does not arise, in view of (b) above.

Pending cases of disputes

56. PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of cases of disputes relating to Central excise, customs, income-tax pending in the various courts of law in the country;

(b) the number of cases in which stay orders have been issued by the courts and the steps taken by Government to get those stay orders vacated;

(c) since when these cases are pending and the steps taken to get them finalised to recover the revenue of Government locked up in those cases;

(d) whether Government had appointed any committee to go into the above and to suggest ways and means to overcome the increase in the litigation cases;

(e) if so, whether the committee had submitted any report thereon; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a) and (b) The number of case relating to Central Excise, Custom and Income Tax pending in Hig Courts (H.Os.) and the Supreme Courts (S.C.) and the number cases in which stay orders have bee granted by the said courts are a under:—

		Total No. of pending cases		No. of cases in which stay orders have been grante	
		SC	H.Cs.	SC	H. Cs.
(i)	Central Excise (as on 31-10-94)	2875	4525	368	463
(ii)	Customs	1627 (as on 31-12-1994)	7940	111 (as on 31-12-1993)	317
(iii)	Income Tax (as on 30-9-94)	6328	48954	17	287 (Prov.)

(c) All possible efforts are made in cunsultation with the Ministry of Law to get the stay orders vacated. Information regarding the period of pendency is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) and (f) Do not arise.

Reducion in Customs Duty

57. PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the items on which customs duty was cut on the import under open general licence in the last two years;

(b) the reasons for giving such a concession and what benefits that concession gave to the common man at large;

(c) whether there is again a proposal to reduce the customs duty on edible oils; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor an the decision taken by Governmen thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN TH MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHR M. V. CHADRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a) The details of changes made i the customs duty rates in 1993-9 and 1994-95 budgets are explained i the "Memorandum explaining th position in the Finance Bill 1993 an 1994" laid on the Table of the Hous at the time of presentation of th Budgets for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

(b) The reduction of customs dut is to achieve objectives like availab lity of capital goods and raw mate rials to industry at reasonable price so as to make them globally competi tive, giving boost to investment, etc Such reduction is in larger publi interest.

(c) and (d) In view of the ensuin budget, it is not possible to indicat the views of the Government at thi stage.